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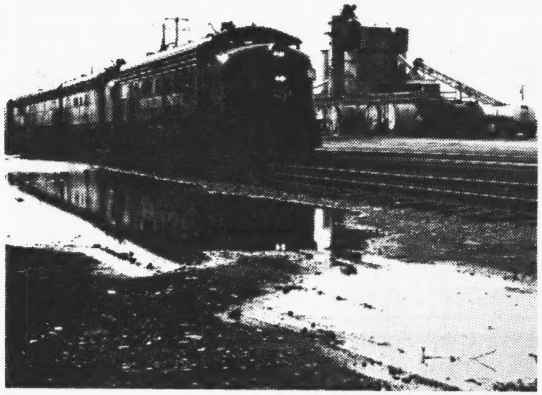
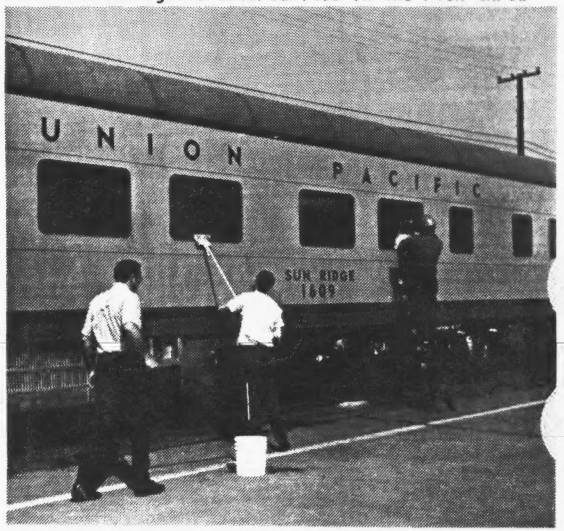


A weekend for rail excursions was the 3-day Washington's Birthday weekend of Feb. 17-19. In the San Francisco area's first spring weather of 1973, two excursions were seen. At left, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR has left Oakland on time on Feb. 17 and roars past Berkeley's Cedar Street crossing, reflecting in puddles of recent rain. It is carrying extra cars of a Railway & Locomotive Historical Society tour bound for Ogden where they would run Ogden-L.A. as a special train arriving Feb. 20, and thence back to Oakland on the COAST DAYLIGHT. Photo by Message Media.

The photos on the front cover and below picture a special "Snowflake Special" train run by the Pacific Railroad Society from Los Angeles to Sparks (Reno), Nevada and back. The train ran overnight out of L.A., leaving 8pm Feb. 16. In the cover photo it is moving past Oakland's Jack London Square at 11:30am Feb. 17, four hours late. A crank telephone call had stopped the train 4 hours while equipment was examined. The FBI may be asked to investigate the matter. As the train pulled into the Oakland Amtrak depot (photo below), railfans set to work washing windows while a worker on a ladder taped up broken glass. The train had gathered no less than six broken windows down its length, apparently the work of incorrigible suburbanites in the rock-throwing zone between San Jose and Oakland. This area has given trouble in the past, and altho Southern Pacific police have patrolled the area, they have been ineffective in halting the vandalism.



Seven railfan-owned private cars ran on the train, and for the occasion Amtrak came up with an array of unrefurbished SP and UP cars, including sleepers "Pacific Island," "Sun Ridge," "Sun Isle," and SP 9120; SP diner 10210 and "Daylight" coach visible in front cover picture. The private cars were beautifully refurbished and appointed in modern decor, while the Amtrak cars had an air of stale decay. Photos from stereo originals by Ted Nelson.

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 3 NO. 4
SECOND ISSUE OF
FEBRUARY 1973
#54

LETTERS

I have just returned from a trip between Trenton, NJ and Chicago and return aboard the BROADWAY LIMITED. In contrast to your somewhat negative article by George Hyko (RTN, Vol. 2, Nos. 20-21) I found the BROADWAY to be in its best form in many years.

The entire consist was one of refurbished cars and the service in the diners was excellent. The crew, which is composed primarily of ex-20th CENTURY men, was the most efficient and courteous I have been served by in a long while. An ex-PRR service supervisor who has been riding the BROADWAY for 20 years accompanied us eastbound. He has once again returned to see that the service meets the stringent standards of the BROADWAY's all-Pullman days.

Even the roadbed was not as horrendous as it is said to be. The one really rough stretch is mainly between Crestline and Canton, OH.

Arrival was close to the advertised in both directions. Altogether it was the best trip I have taken on the BROADWAY in many years!

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Newtown, Pennsylvania

RTN has reported only a small portion of the forthcoming changes in the Chicago rail commuter network. Fare increases have been requested by C&NW, CRI&P, and ICG (25%!) as well as by the Milwaukee Road. Meanwhile, service on the Milwaukee Road will soon be improved, thanks to federal and state grants to the Northwest Suburban Mass Transit District. Thirteen new locomotives and 36 new bilevel cars (probably from the Budd Co.) will be purchased and operated on the West Line between Chicago and Elgin. The Northwest Suburban Mass Transit District, which covers the Milwaukee's North Line (Chicago to Walworth, Wisconsin) is preparing an application for similar grants which will pay for two new locomotives and 5 bilevels in addition to extension of CTC operation and 6 new suburban stations.

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It is hoped that fare hikes and service cuts on the CTA can be forestalled by an emergency grant from the governments involved. At stake, railwise, is the Evanston Express, the thru rush-hour service between Wilmette and downtown, and Sunday-holiday service on the Ravenswood line to the northwest side. The CTA had planned to cut service north of Evanston to shuttle trains only, necessitating a change at Howard St. The service would then be comparable to that on the CTA's other suburban line, the Skokie Swift (over the former North Shore).

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The depot in Roseville, CA was torn down the week of Feb. 5. It was built in 1907 and moved in 1910 to its present location.

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ON THE COVER: See rear cover for caption and additional photographs.

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Can Amtrak Survive Itself?

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND OPINION ARTICLE by C. D. Washington

Attention has been focused during the last few months on the Office of Management and Budget's stance toward Amtrak's funding from July 1, 1973. While little doubt can be raised that OMB is not pro-passenger train, the question can be raised, Is OMB Amtrak's biggest hurdle toward long-range survival?

The thesis of this article is that judicious self-help will go farther toward improving Amtrak than federal subsidies. Will Amtrak do the right things to enable it to become a viable part of the transportation sector of the country? A critical look at what Amtrak has done and seems to be planning on several key, gut issues is discouraging.

Planned across-the-board fare increases, no substantive plans for new equipment, and a ho-hum attitude toward costly terminals and cost controls are three areas which, if handled in the manner Amtrak seems to have adopted, could kill the passenger train as effectively as the complete cut-off of federal funds. In spite of all the talk of large patronage gains where fares have been cut, new concepts in passenger car design, and the "millions" to be saved by eliminating monumental stations, Amtrak seems to be going against reason on these topics. The remainder of this article discusses these three issues.

FARES. Amtrak has, almost from the beginning, talked of increasing fares as if this were the only method for decreasing losses. On at least one occasion before a Congressional subcommittee, a great deal of skepticism was expressed over the wisdom of this idea. In fact, the fare cuts implemented to date have probably come about because of Congressional pressure for them.

Experience with fare reductions certainly has proven their desirability for increasing both revenues and ridership. Year-to-year gains where reduced fares were implemented have been, in most cases, enthusiastically received by the public.

The first reduction was the $9.90 New York-Boston fare experiment which sparked a 65% gain in 1972 over 1971, the first increases in several decades. Any thought that such gains were obtainable only in corridors was ended when further reductions were introduced in June, 1972. Soon thereafter, the COAST STARLIGHT began recording gains nearly double the previous year.

On the other hand, Western routes where fare increases were introduced (Chicago-Los Angeles, Chicago-San Francisco, and Chicago-Seattle) saw no real growth. Were it not for the strikes during the spring and summer of 1971, some of these routes might have actually recorded declines. Therefore, to continue to push ahead with wide-scale increases indicates a lack of basic understanding. One wonders if Amtrak thinks the only people who ride trains are buffs who will not change for anything, and therefore should be milked to the fullest extent.

EQUIPMENT. Amtrak's locomotives and rolling stock provide one with a relatively complete history of the numerous car designs acquired by the railroads during the change from heavyweight to streamlined equipment. However, with the exception of the hi-level Santa Fe cars and Metroliner units, none of the rest of the equipment has more than marginal value beyond nostalgic emotions. With the cited exceptions, trying to run Amtrak with the roster now available is about equivalent to running an airline with nothing better than DC-4's. So, what has been done to remedy the situation?

On the locomotive side, one might be heartened at the 40-unit order placed by Amtrak in November for new power. However, the truth of the matter is that Santa Fe had decided to convert their passenger F units to freight service, leaving Amtrak with no choice but to order new locomotives for the SUPER CHIEF, TEXAS CHIEF, and SAN DIEGANS. It therefore appears that Amtrak will continue to nurse its collection of inefficient, breakdown-prone E and F units until forced to replace them.

The car side is equally bad. Except for a token order for turbine-powered trains, Amtrak has no definite plans to order new cars (see Railway Age, Jan. 8). By going to cars similar to the Santa Fe hi-levels, the number of cars needed could be cut in half. Furthermore, power requirements, maintenance costs, and personnel could be reduced proportionately. Converting new equipment into dollars and cents, it could probably save Amtrak $15-20 million a year in expenses, or as much as 15% of the present deficit. This is to say nothing of the attraction new equipment would have to the public in terms of traveling appeal and more reliable performance.

COSTS. In the January 8 issue of Railway Age magazine, Amtrak President Roger Lewis stated, "And you reduce your losses, in this business, not by cutting your costs but by increasing your revenue." How this statement could be made when Amtrak has a station like Washington Union Terminal that costs about $15 million a year to operate, or more than half of the <u>total</u> annual Metroliner revenues, defies comprehension.

Amtrak's record in cost reduction is pathetic. Only two large stations (Chicago's Central and Cincinnati) have been replaced, and firm plans for further replacements have been formalized for only one other terminal, Jacksonville. Meanwhile, Amtrak continues to pay millions each year for many facilities it doesn't need or even benefit from.

Waste and inefficiency are bad enough, but even valid costs are grossly misallocated by the ICC accounting methods used by the railroads and passed on to Amtrak. This is why, for example, the train-mile expense for the BROADWAY LIMITED is $15 and that for the SUPER CHIEF is about $10, even though both trains have about the same cost inputs.

Many cost elements of a train are on the basis of a trip. For example, the cost of cleaning a coach on the BROADWAY is basically the same as cleaning a coach on a New York-Philadelphia Clocker. However, under current practices, most of these costs are lumped together and allocated on a mileage basis. So the 900-mile BROADWAY gets ten times the cleaning expense of the 90-mile Clocker. A reallocation of these and other costs would probably put the BROADWAY at or near a profit while the "profitable" corridor runs rack up a big loss.

Furthermore, these accounting distortions make it easier to pad costs since the accounting information does not indicate actual causes in some instances. Amtrak is now unable to generate valid management information from their accounting data.

So, it appears that Amtrak is basically providing a warmed over trip with no major plans for long-range rejuvenation. The sad story of the Canadian National passenger program is now largely being repeated here. As with CN, the public will not respond to promises for more than a few years. After a time they will expect to see tangible results, and if they are not forthcoming, will generally leave the rails.

As long as the issues discussed here follow the course they appear to be taking, Amtrak seems to have little chance of surviving past 1975. The snail pace approach that has characterized these critical aspects of the Corporation's performance can only be fatal in the long run.

SUBSCRIBE TO THIS NEWSLETTER. Only six dollars per year for 24 issues. Back copies 25¢ each (see complete list of those available in the Dec. 4, 1972 issue). We are extending our offer on the first six issues of RTN for only $1--good for orders postmarked before April 1, 1973. (Ask for the "First Six Issues Pack.") Address: Message Media, Dept. RTN, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709.

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THE TRAINS OF FEBRUARY IN THE NOT-SO-DEEP SOUTH

by Kenneth Maylath

I checked out activities on the Southern Railway on a weekend trip to gain some impressions of this non-Amtrak road which apparently intends to remain that way. Much favorable comment has come forth on the SOUTHERN CRESCENT. I purposely set out to check on the PIEDMONT, one of Southern's mixed-train operations.

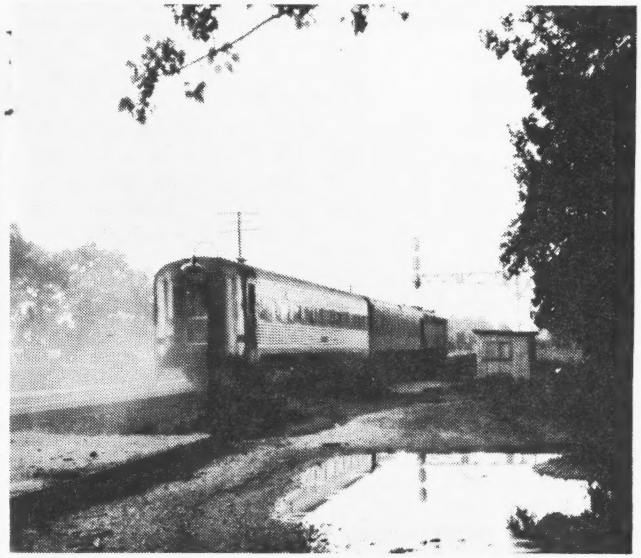
The PIEDMONT arrived in Alexandria more than 5mins in advance of its scheduled 10:10am departure time on the morning of Feb. 10, thanks to the generous 25mins time allowance from Washington. We left on time. A couple miles down the line, right after the Southern leaves the RF&P right of way, we paused for 8mins to attach about 15 piggyback freight cars. These included a couple 2-level loads of light trucks--making our consist mixed in the truer sense of the word. We already had two baggage cars and four coaches. The first coach was a heavyweight, the other three lightweight stainless steel, including a slightly refurbished snack bar coach. The snack section actually took up one half of the car, including a small counter, two tables and several lounge chairs. A good variety of light food, including some simple hot dishes was offered at fairly reasonable prices. A fair scattering of passengers occupied the cars, with the last one closed off. It was followed, incidentally, by a private car, not Southern, later detached at the division point at Monroe.

Things moved along pretty well for awhile, with speeds of 60 to 65mph being reached on the Southern's well-maintained but generally curving main line. We were on time passing Orange, Virginia, but just south of there (where the C&O line from Charlottesville comes in) we ground to a stop at the beginning of a single track section which continued for several miles. There we waited for some 25mins for the arrival of the northbound #8--with its Lynchburg to Washington single heavyweight coach and string of piggybacks. It was running a bit late. It seemed as tho we would have been able to reach the next double track section with no problem without delaying #8, but it wasn't arranged that way. By using only 2mins at Charlottesville, we left there 24mins late. A little more time went by the boards in Monroe as we dropped that private car, putting us 33mins behind. With some mail to unload at Lynchburg, we just about held our own. A few minutes were picked up on the run to Danville, with an arrival there exactly 30mins late. After a 9-min servicing stop (watering the cars) and with a load of perhaps 50 Cub Scouts and their leaders added to the passenger load, the PIEDMONT pulled out of Danville, leaving me behind on a sub-freezing, overcast afternoon. However, the freak snow storm which caused such problems in the deep South that weekend brought none of the white stuff along that stretch of the Southern.

Those weather conditions may well have played a part in the northbound PIEDMONT's being reported one hour behind its scheduled 4:15 arrival time in Danville. When it finally showed up, it was more like 75mins late, and pulled out behind schedule by that amount after the 10-min servicing stop. The consist was fairly similar to the southbound run. Four A and B units, a heavyweight and two lightweight coaches, a couple baggage cars, then the 15 or so piggybacks. The snack bar coach was identical to the southbound car, except that it had not been refurbished. Still, as with all of the cars, it was pleasant, in good condition and properly heated on a cold day. This time our stop at Lynchburg was but a minute or so, and we left 70mins late, then just holding our own out of Monroe. The lateness had been cut to 62mins by the time it left Charlottesville, following a stop there lasting but one minute. With considerable padding in the schedule into Washington, that hour could have been reduced by quite a bit if no further difficulties came along. I was not around to see the result, however, having decided to detrain at Charlottesville and check into the Amtrak side of things.

Our arrival in the city which houses the University of Virginia was at the exact time that the westbound JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY was supposed to be making its stop at the Southern's station, after leaving the Amtrak, former C&O depot a few blocks down

the street. But the JWR was not to be seen. Moving down to the other station, I found the single dome car from Newport News waiting, with switcher attached, but no sign of the train from Washington. It was expected to pull in about one hour behind its 8:05pm scheduled arrival time. There was a reason for this, I found. Eastbound that morning it was about 5 hours late, meaning a Washington arrival so late that the train was, in turn, late leaving there for its westbound trip. And the long delay was said to be the product of a derailment at Cincinnati. I didn't hear whether the train itself was involved (most likely not) or whether a freight had caused the problem. In any event, it finally pulled in at 9:12 and didn't leave after the switching operation until 9:35--or 75mins late. The equipment was the normal consist: sleeper-diner, sleeper (SCL), refurbished coach and refurbished dome. A fairly decent load



Amtrak train 99, the little Newport News-Charlottesville VA connection of the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY/GEORGE WASHINGTON, on this occasion minus its dome, kicked up a cloud of dust last mid-summer as it breezed thru Lee Hall, VA at 75mph. Doug Ellis photographed the consist: Amtrak E unit, B&O tavern-baggage 1351, and SCL (ex-SAL) coach. There is serious talk of replacing this train with a bus connection for the 3-hr, 20-min trip. A single dome coach was an alternate consist often seen.

of passengers was aboard. I was going only to Staunton, the first stop, about an hour away, and spent that time in the darkened dome as we wound upgrade and thru the Blue Ridge Tunnel. The train made up a couple minutes on that stretch, leaving Staunton about 70mins late.

My plan was to catch the eastbound GEORGE WASHINGTON on the following morning, due in Staunton at 8:53. I thanked my good fortune that I hadn't done the same thing on the previous day, when the train didn't arrive there until after one o'clock--or that I hadn't decided to take the round trip from Charlottesville to Newport News that day.

The 11th dawned clear and cold, a temperature of under 20. Arriving at the station I found an agent on duty, two others waiting to board, and the word that the train was 20mins late. My ticket was back to Alexandria, where my car had been left the previous day. When the GEORGE WASHINGTON arrived, it was 35 rather than 20mins late. The consist was similar to the previous evening, except with the dome car right behind the two diesel units this time, since the train is not turned in Chicago. Thus, most of the dome seats were facing backwards, as has been remarked by previous travelers over the route. The dome and legrest coach both were refurbished, as was the diner-sleeper on the rear. The dining area was able to seat more than 20, with a 3-man crew on duty. Unfortunately, however, the cooking stove had broken down, meaning cold food, plus coffee for the passengers that day. The regular sleeper, by the way, was a Santa Fe job built by American Car and Foundry.

With a pretty good load of passengers (more than on the previous evening), we headed over the mountains and thru the tunnel under bright sunlight back to Charlottesville. Again, we made the run in several minutes less than the scheduled time.

Again, also, the switching at Charlottesville was nothing to get excited about, and we were still about 30mins late leaving there for our run to Gordonsville, then north a few miles to join the Southern at Orange. Our non-stop run to Alexandria went like clockwork, however. From the time we left Charlottesville until the train pulled out of Alexandria, after a brief stop, was but 1hr 50mins. The two hours allowed for that stretch of 107 miles is about the same westbound as eastbound. Some extra time, about 10mins, is allowed into Washington. Thus, the train probably got in there about 12:55 or just 10mins late--just in time for a fast transfer to the northbound MERCHANTS LIMITED at 1:05 for those continuing into the Northeast Corridor. Whatever the exact arrival time in the District, it was a distinct improvement over the late afternoon arrival of the previous day.

RIDING THE FIRST INTER-AMERICAN

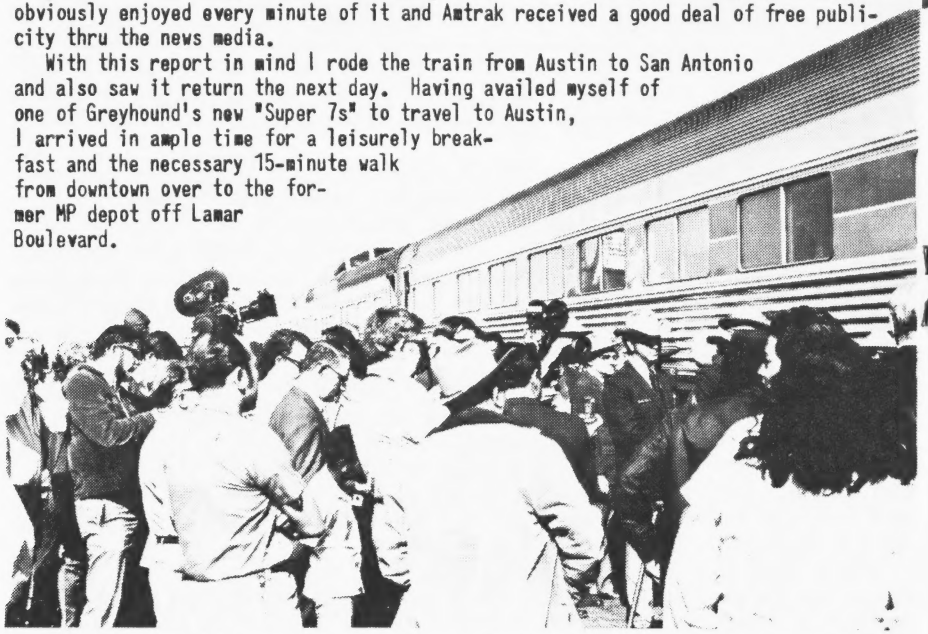
by Alfred E. Ehm

Amtrak's newest train came into town January 27 with a whoop and a holler as only befits the Lone Star State! After months of delay the INTER-AMERICAN finally rolled south thru throngs of delighted people who had come to see or ride the new train on this brightest of blue and golden days. Running nearly an hour late for most of its journey, No. 21 carried 400-500 passengers, while as many as 10,000 may have come to the right-of-way to see it pass.

The INTER-AMERICAN may well have been one of Amtrak's most carefully planned yet most unprepared endeavors. On the previous Saturday, for example, when Amtrak's offshoot from the TEXAS CHIEF was to commence operation from Temple south, Austin had no platform and no ticket agency, a contractor was rolling down three car lengths of blacktop along a stretch of MoPac mainline on San Antonio's westside, and carpenters in Laredo were pondering the best method of turning a little room in the MP's depot into a ticket office.

Yet, in spite of the many obstacles and numerous snafus, Amtrak completed one of the most successful promotional undertakings so far--all without advertising, and only more or less casual mention in the press. Those who came to ride or to look obviously enjoyed every minute of it and Amtrak received a good deal of free publicity thru the news media.

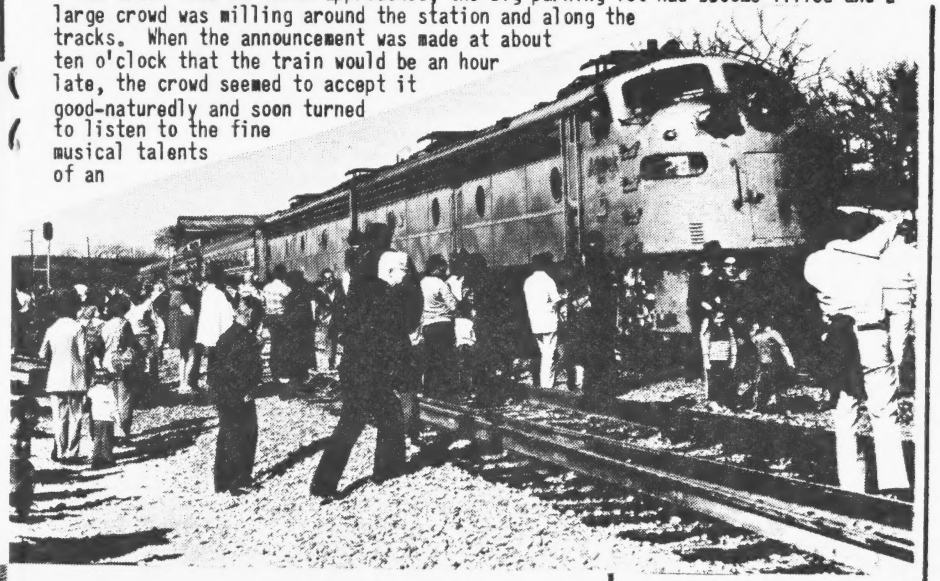
With this report in mind I rode the train from Austin to San Antonio and also saw it return the next day. Having availed myself of one of Greyhound's new "Super 7s" to travel to Austin, I arrived in ample time for a leisurely breakfast and the necessary 15-minute walk from downtown over to the former MP depot off Lamar Boulevard.



TV cameramen filmed the welcoming ceremony at San Antonio, where 600 people showed up.

Since it was some 80 minutes to train time, the crowd was quite thin. An area in front of the station had been roped off and equipped with a lectern, and a handful of Chamber officials were waiting. Two ticket clerks were unable to answer fully the many telephone calls and people asking for information, but were later assisted by two off-duty Amtrak men from San Antonio. MoPac had grudgingly turned over to Amtrak what used to be the segregated waiting room some ten years ago, a space in the rear of the building about twice the size of a living room, and had also partitioned off from the former large ticket-operating office a cubicle about 15 by 6 feet.

As train time of 10:50 approached, the big parking lot had become filled and a large crowd was milling around the station and along the tracks. When the announcement was made at about ten o'clock that the train would be an hour late, the crowd seemed to accept it good-naturedly and soon turned to listen to the fine musical talents of an eight-man group, part of the 250-man University of Texas marching band, that had just begun to play. Then, after it was announced that the train had left Taylor ten minutes earlier, the restless crowd of some 2,000 formed a solid wall across the right-of-way in anticipation of the promised train, when unexpectedly a dissonant horn sounded in the distance and the yellow UP engines, warning light flashing on the cab roof, came slowly around the bend.



At Austin the crowd swarmed around the train. Seen are the two Amtrak E9A units in UP yellow, renumbered 428 and 420. Both engines have since been withdrawn from the route.

While part of the crowd surrounded the speaker's platform to listen to the ten-minute ceremony, an even larger mass surged toward the silvery train. After a few minutes the engineer pulled the train up to allow boarding of the last three cars which had been reserved for Austin. (A half hour before the train's arrival it was announced that over 175 tickets had already been sold!) And then, after the last speaker had wished guests and passengers farewell and a pleasant journey, the distinctive sounds of a Mariachi band could be heard and it was time to get aboard. It took another good five minutes to get everyone back on board, and the train rolled slowly south to cross the bridge over the Colorado. Next stop San Marcos and another trackside ceremony!

For this inaugural run Amtrak had put together an attractive 12-car train--all but one in Amtrak colors. Pulled by Amtrak E9As 428 and 420, part of a group of UP engines leased for service on the TEXAS CHIEF, the train consisted of coach 4821, AUT 200 "Linoma" (an observation dome leased from Autoliner), chair-cafe car 8400, coaches 4855, 4541, 4531, 4825, lunch-counter-lounge 8351, coaches 5227, 5225, 4495, and 4820. Only 8351, a "Lewis and Clark Traveller's Rest" from the

Some of the crowd of 2000 at Austin gather in front of the station as the first INTER-AMERICAN arrives, awaiting the start of ceremonies.

former NORTH COAST LIMITED, appeared in its native two-tone green. (Interestingly, two cars came from the Seattle-Vancouver route: car 8400, which was originally built for the former INTERNATIONAL, and "Linoma," which ran last on Amtrak's PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL.)

The train was especially attractive because a number of the cars had apparently been polished. Some of the coaches had been refurbished. Car 8400 served as the revenue diner and was staffed by Amtrak employees, the girls wearing bright-colored smocks over their regular uniforms. One of the officials told me later that the food ought to be good since the manager of one of Amtrak's commissaries served as chef. I did not have an opportunity to sample the food or even peek at the menu.

The first two cars were reserved for dignitaries and for the press. About half a dozen Amtrak girls working from a bar underneath the dome regaled the guests with a seemingly endless supply of sandwiches, dips and chips, beer and cordials. The MoPac crew consisted of a jovial conductor and forty-ish trainman, both in uniforms seemingly borrowed from the local Little Theater. They did not collect the tickets in the obsessive manner as is still done occasionally on the SP, but collected their coupons in a casual way, almost as if it were an activity to pass the time. A large group had commandeered the last car where the temperature was at least 95 degrees and, having spread their portable bar across two or three seats, proceeded to party their way down to the border.

The 84-mile ride to San Antonio on this cloudless winter day was pleasant enough, even over some of the rough MP track. I had the opportunity to visit the dome and to chat with four or five Amtrak officials while comfortably sitting in one of "Linoma's" purple lounge chairs. Equipped with appropriate credentials--a copy of RTN in my pocket--I was readily admitted to this restricted area, but later learned that almost all of those occupying the dome were actually neither dignitaries nor accredited members of the news media, but rather ordinary passengers who had simply crashed the party and now partook of Amtrak's hospitality.

Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez of San Antonio welcomed other Congressmen, Amtrak officials & guests, then rode to Laredo.

Over a dozen Amtrak officials, mainly from Washington, were on the train, among them two Vice Presidents--Gerry Morgan of Government Affairs and David Watts of Planning--and A. R. Lowry, the Superintendent of Operations for the Midwest region. That Amtrak is conscious of the importance of maintaining cordial relations with elected officials, especially members of Congress, was readily apparent. Practically the whole Government Affairs department was on hand to greet and entertain the various public officials. Later, after the 10-min stop in San Marcos and another ceremony with speeches and handshakes and a uniformed color guard from Gary Job Corps Center, Congressman Jake Pickle of Austin came into "Linoma's" lounge and accompanied by "Los Conquistadores"--the 5-man Mariachi band--gave a rendition of "Home on the range" and "The eyes of Texas are upon you" on his harmonica.

During my 90mins on the train I spoke with a few Amtrak officials. Most rewarding was my chat with Charles Warwick of Amtrak's Public Information Office. A soft-spoken and courteous man, he immediately brought me a press kit and an Amtrak lapel pin and directed me to the sunken bar beneath the dome where red-coated Amtrak girls handed me a thick turkey sandwich and an ice-cold drink. We talked about the multitude of problems faced by Amtrak, the prospects of increased service this summer, the many obstacles encountered in getting this new train started. Concerning service thru Arkansas from St. Louis, he pointed out the lack of money and the pressing need to institute service to Cleveland. When I pressed him about the degree of cooperation by the railroads, he declined to comment, but reading between the lines of remarks made by various Amtrak officials, I felt it was clear that the Corporation's major obstacle is resistance on the part of the railroads. (The San Antonio Light quoted an unnamed Amtrak official: "Some railroads are great but MoPac is just not too pro for passenger service.")

We arrived San Antonio 75mins late--not bad considering the delays en route. A crowd of 500-600, including Congressman Henry B. Gonzales, the mayor pro tem, the county judge, and a dozen Chamber officials in red coats, were waiting as the train pulled in. Comically, a wedge of some 80 riders wanted to board the first two reserved cars, preventing the officials from getting off. There was much picture taking, with the four Congressmen--Bob Eckhardt of Houston, Abraham Kazen of Laredo, Jake Pickle, and H. B. Gonzalez of San Antonio--as the center of attraction. The train left 25mins later with about 350 passengers aboard.

San Antonio's relatively small turnout can be attributed to two causes. First, the newspapers did not bother to mention the event in their Saturday editions and many people consequently forgot. Secondly, the city was included in Amtrak's original service plan and as such was not as concerned about the new train as other towns along the line which have not had any rail service in years. San Antonio does not have an effective city-county Amtrak committee as Dallas, for example, and the chamber of commerce along with the two local governments has been more content with issuing bland statements about the need for more train service than actually working for it in many directions.

I was unable to ride the train to Laredo, but can report thru a reliable source that arrival was about 80mins late. Reportedly some 1,500 people, including city officials and the Laredo High School band, were at the MP depot to welcome the train. About 15 taxis were marshalled outside the depot to carry the passengers across the International Bridge and to the NdeM's station, altho only part of the group continued their journey. For the return trip Amtrak moved "Linoma" to the other end and dead-headed the last five cars.

Amtrak issued a separate timetable--NRPC Form 6--which combined the schedule of the TEXAS CHIEF with that of the new train. The 4x9 timecard was freely available on the train but is not to be had at the local Amtrak depot even tho 50,000 were printed. Passengers in San Antonio are boarded at the site of the former International and Great Northern (MoPac) depot, almost 2 miles west of the Amtrak (SP) station served by the SUNSET. The reason for this absurdity was SP's resistance to allowing the INTER-AMERICAN the use of its tracks and present depot. Passengers are carried between the SP station and the boarding site by a bus of the San Antonio Transit Co. The vehicle, a Greyhound "Challenger," pulls up to the train and drops arrivals off close to their hotel before returning to the Amtrak depot. Amtrak obviously expects to stay at the present

site, since two water tanks are to be installed which will serve as surge tanks to speed up the servicing.

Patronage and on-time performance are relatively good. The train consists of three cars, Amtrak 4820, 4821, and 8400, and on several occasions when I observed it, carried about 80-100 passengers. Amtrak has run one ad so far, an announcement in one newspaper on Feb. 13. Austin is so far the leading city in ridership. Altho exact loading figures are unavailable to me, I got the boarding figures for the southbound train at Austin for 3 consecutive Saturdays: Feb. 10, 107 (!), 17th, 47, and 24th, 76 passengers. The Sunday train carries numerous college students returning to their universities in San Marcos, Austin and Ft. Worth. This shoots down the railroads' claims that the young generation disdains trains in favor of other modes.

Amtrak's tariff for the new run matches the company's general pricing structure. The only concession to innovation is a 5-day roundtrip excursion fare--$30 Ft. Worth to Laredo and return, against a single fare of $20. San Antonio-Austin is $3.75, to Ft. Worth $13.25. Not much of a bargain really since you can fly in a jet of any of 3 airlines between Dallas and Houston or San Antonio for $13. In my personal view Amtrak's fares are too high by 15-20%. Amtrak's experimentation with fares in the Boston and Milwaukee corridors clearly indicates that patronage is a direct function of the pricing structure.

Altho the INTER-AMERICAN is a "compromise," as Amtrak admits, Texas is nevertheless glad to have this little train. If patronage continues, it will hardly be another month before another coach and larger cafe car will be needed. Daily service is obviously out and so is a rearrangement of the present schedule in the near future to establish direct connections with the TEXAS CHIEF. But the train is running, and that's what counts!

Urban-Suburban Transit

One of the chief roadblocks to breaking the Highway Trust Fund so its money could be used for rapid transit purposes as well has been Representative John C. Kluczynski, Democrat of Illinois. Late in February the media reported that Kluczynski had finally seen the light and announced that he has broken with the highwaymen. He holds the important position as chairman of the House subcommittee on roads of the Public Works Committee. "Seeing the light" involved pressure from Chicago Mayor Daley, whose city's Transit Authority faces a $45 million deficit, and the receipt of 7,000 coupons from readers of Chicago Today that urged him to change his position. The Highway Action Coalition has called Kluczynski one of its chief roadblocks..... The Boeing Company was the lowest bidder for an order of 230 new trolleys, 150 to go to Boston and 80 to San Francisco. Boeing's Vertol Division bid $63.2 million for the job, and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission voted Feb. 27 to approve the contract. The new rail cars will be the first such to be built in the U.S. since the early 1950's. San Francisco currently uses the last streetcar built here, car no. 1040. The cars should be running in about two years..... Commuters on the PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) line connecting New York & New Jersey could find themselves without trains starting March 3 unless talks to avert a strike by the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen that got underway Feb. 27 pan out..... The new Secretary of Transportation, Claude S. Brinegar, finally explained his stand on the highway-vs-mass transit issue. He said he supports use of highway money for transit, opposes a proposed 10,000-mile extension of the federal highway system, but is opposed to using federal subsidies for operating expenses of transit systems..... The Southern Pacific, not surprisingly, this month rejected the idea of using its Los Angeles-Chatsworth tracks for commuter operations. But L.A. is now studying the possibility of buying or condemning all SP's property in the county..... BART had a record number of passengers--39,747--on the Feb. 19 holiday, and an earlier record of 37,983 the previous Monday holiday. An engineer hired to consult on the question of BART safety and train defects reported that Rohr Corp. has delivered cars with numerous defects. Rohr denied it turned out cars with known defects.....

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THE CRY OF "Elitism" is, we've judged, the almost universal reaction to Chief Justice Warren Burger's successful efforts to get cigar and pipe smoking prohibited in Metro-club cars late last year. Now Senator Hugh Scott, Republican leader, has asked Burger to reconsider his complaint and permit pipe smoking, since Scott is an "addicted" pipe smoker..... WE HEREBY RETRACT the statement on the rear cover about rock-throwing. A late report indicates that the throwing took place near Glendale, and it was bricks heaved by some white male adult cretins, deliberately well-aimed. Part of the 4-hour delay of the SNOWFLAKE SPECIAL was due to a collision with a truck. The authorities believe they have the person who made the crank phone call..... THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC may still see its Peninsula commute service upgraded, against its will. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors has kept the plan alive by ordering a commission to study it..... ILLINOIS CENTRAL GULF has had yet another derailment, reports Mike Blaszak. One car of a northbd heavyweight commuter train from South Chicago derailed at the throat of the Randolph St. Terminal during the morning rush hour Feb. 12, injuring no-one seriously, but delaying about 30 other trains. Meanwhile the DOT has tentatively approved a $7.5 million grant to buy 15 new bi-level cars for ICG. Specifications for the cars won't be approved, tho, until completion of a study of last October's bad crash in Chicago..... THE FAST MAIL, newsletter of 20th C. RR Club, reported in Feb. the remarks of Amtrak Chicago Regional Sales Manager Steve Kabala made Jan. 13 at an NRHS meeting: Chicago-Milwaukee TurboTrain speed should be 100mph, for a one-hour run over the route. The trains will be extra fare, and may operate Chicago-Detroit besides Chicago-St. Louis. Next summer look for a daily running of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, routed directly into Portland. The CHIEF will not run this summer, having been judged unsuccessful, so Amtrak might run a section of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR between L.A. and Ogden. The DENVER ZEPHYR slumbercoach may be extended all the way to Oakland. All present tri-weekly trains will see daily operation next summer. The addition of a second Chicago-N.Y. train is being seriously considered if patronage continues high. Amtrak wants to use CNY ex-PENINSULA 400 cars on a Chicago-Springfield run as the LINCOLN LINER. End of Kabala's remarks..... DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S report & recommendations regarding Amtrak is due out March 15. Those who have seen advance copies express disappointment that the document is watered-down and unimaginative (what else to expect from Washington bureaucrats?). It makes no exciting recommendations that would really help us achieve a balanced transportation system. It even recommends dropping at least one present Amtrak train, the NATIONAL LIMITED. A product of limited intelligence, no doubt..... CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR OBSERVATION cars have been pulled off the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, and it is reported that Amtrak will place them on the TEXAS CHIEF--perhaps only for the inauguration of the rerouting through Dallas..... EMBARRASSED AT THE horrible safety and driving conditions on the new Interstate 5 Los Angeles-San Francisco, the Calif. Div. of Highways has--would you believe?--constructed a windmill near Los Banos to give drivers something to look at to avoid "highway hypnosis." We would like to suggest trains instead, which don't have the lack-of-scenery problem and are far less monotonous than driving..... BRITISH TRAIN OPERATORS were to stage a 24-hr strike the end of Feb. to protest wage-price freezes..... COOKS CONTINENTAL TIMETABLE, March issue, is a special big Centenary edition. Copy costs $3 surface mail or $6.25 air. Write: Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., Publicity Dept., 45 Berkeley St., London W1A 1EB, England.....

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Amtrak has been working hard to overcome its troubles, and the (Washington-Montreal) ski train did manage to generate a beguiling air of festivity. But the poor equipment, lumpy roadbed, still-sloppy service and late arrivals made the long trip more exhausting than it should have been. The ski train may be an idea whose time has come, but Amtrak is not yet making good on the promise."

--Newsweek Magazine, March 5

Express Ads

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PASSENGER TRAINS of Canada, North American commuter trains and streetcars are among the new subjects added to Northwest Rail Images' line of color slide sets. Two Canadian sets featuring CN, CP, ONR, GO, ACR, NAR, PGE and E&N now join our three U.S. "Before Amtrak" sets. Other non-passenger sets available, too. Send an SSE for a revised list of 14 sets, or 25¢ for list and sample, to Northwest Rail Images, 4891 Donald Street, Eugene, Oregon 97405.

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THOSE NEW PASSENGER DIESELS everybody is talking about, get a photo of them! Be on our mailing list. A postcard will do. Will send list when new units arrive for service. SDP40F Photos, P. O. Box 986, Colton, California 92342.

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